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Information and communications technologies for development

Draft resolution submitted by the Vice-Chair of the Committee, Mr. Bitrus Vandy Yohanna (Nigeria), on the basis of informal consultations on draft resolution A/C.2/66/L.21

Information and communications technologies for development

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 56/183 of 21 December 2001, 57/238 of 20 December 2002, 57/270 B of 23 June 2003, 59/220 of 22 December 2004, 60/252 of 27 March 2006, 62/182 of 19 December 2007, 63/202 of 19 December 2008, 64/187 of 21 December 2009, 65/141 of 20 December 2010 and other relevant resolutions,

Recalling also Economic and Social Council resolutions 2006/46 of 28 July 2006, 2008/3 of 18 July 2008, 2009/7 of 24 July 2009 and 2010/2 of 19 July 2010, and taking note of Economic and Social Council resolution 2011/16 of 26 July 2011 on the assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society,

Recalling the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit on the Information Society at its first phase, held in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003,[1] and endorsed by the General Assembly,[2] and the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society adopted by the Summit at its second phase, held in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005,[3] and endorsed by the General Assembly,[4]

Recalling also the 2005 World Summit Outcome,[5]

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[1] See A/C.2/59/3, annex.
[2] See resolution 59/220.
[3] See A/60/687.
[4] See resolution 60/252.
[5] See resolution 60/1.

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Recalling further the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals and its outcome document,[6]

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels,[7]

Noting the organization of the World Summit on the Information Society Forum 2011 in Geneva from 16 to 20 May 2011,

Also noting the establishment of the Broadband Commission for Digital Development at the invitation of the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union and the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and taking note of the "Broadband Targets for 2015", established by the Commission at its Broadband Leadership Summit, held in Geneva on 24 and 25 October 2011, which set targets for making broadband policy universal and for boosting affordability and broadband uptake towards the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, to ensure that the potential of broadband connectivity and content are at the service of development,

Recognizing the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in assisting the Economic and Social Council as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up, in particular the review and assessment of the progress made in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, while at the same time maintaining its original mandate on science and technology for development,

Noting the holding of the fourteenth session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, held in Geneva from 23 to 27 May 2011,

Also noting that cultural diversity is the common heritage of humankind and that the information society should be founded on, and stimulate respect for, cultural identity, cultural and linguistic diversity, traditions and religions and foster dialogue among cultures and civilizations, and noting also that the promotion, affirmation and preservation of diverse cultural identities and languages, as reflected in relevant agreed United Nations documents, including the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,[8] will further enrich the information society,

Acknowledging the positive trends in global connectivity and affordability in the field of information and communications technologies, in particular the steady increase in Internet access to one third of the world's population, the rapid diffusion of mobile telephony, the increased availability of multilingual content and Internet addresses and the advent of new services and applications, including m-health, mobile transactions, e-government, e-education, e-business and developmental services, which offer great potential for the development of the information society,

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[6] See resolution 65/1.

[7] A/66/64-E/2011/77.

[8] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Records of the General Conference, Thirty-first Session, Paris, 15 October-3 November 2001*, vol. 1 and corrigendum, *Resolutions*, chap. V, resolution 25, annex I.

Emphasizing, however, that in spite of recent progress, there remains an important digital divide, recognizing in this regard that currently only 26 per cent of the population in developing countries uses the Internet, compared with 74 per cent in developed countries, and stressing the need to reduce the digital divide, including with regard to such issues as international interconnection charges for Internet use, and to ensure that the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies, are available to all,

Reaffirming the need to harness the potential of information and communications technologies to promote the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, through sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development,

Expressing concern about the ongoing adverse impacts of the world financial and economic crisis on the positive trends in the diffusion of information and communications technologies and the investment needed to ensure universal access to such technologies,

Also expressing concern about the growing gap in broadband provision between developed and developing countries, as well as about the new dimensions that the digital divide has taken on,

Recognizing that the lack of capacity-building for the productive use of information and communications technologies needs to be addressed in order to overcome the digital divide,

Also recognizing that the number of Internet users is growing and that the digital divide is also changing in character from one based on whether access is available to one based on the quality of access, the information and skills that users can obtain and the value they can derive from it, and recognizing in this regard, that there is a need to prioritize the use of information and communications technologies through innovative approaches, including multi-stakeholder approaches, within national and regional development strategies,

Reaffirming paragraphs 4, 5 and 55 of the Declaration of Principles, adopted in Geneva in 2003, and recognizing that freedom of expression and the free flow of information, ideas and knowledge are essential for the information society and are beneficial to development,

Conscious of the challenges faced by States, in particular developing countries, in combating cybercrime, and emphasizing the need to reinforce technical assistance and capacity-building activities for the prevention, prosecution and punishment of the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes,

Acknowledging that the Internet is a central element of the infrastructure of the information society and is a global facility available to the public,

Recognizing that the international management of the Internet should be multilateral, transparent and democratic, with the full involvement of Governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations, as stated in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society,

Recognizing also the importance of the Internet Governance Forum and its mandate as a forum for multi-stakeholder dialogue on various matters, including

public policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance, in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet, as well as its role in building partnerships among different stakeholders so as to help in addressing the various issues of Internet governance, while acknowledging the calls for improvements in its working methods,

Recalling its decision that the desirability of the continuation of the Internet Governance Forum will be considered again by Member States in the General Assembly in the context of a ten-year review of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society in 2015,

Reiterating the significance and urgency of the process towards enhanced cooperation in full consistency with the mandate provided in the Tunis Agenda and the need for enhanced cooperation to enable Governments, on an equal footing, to carry out their roles and responsibilities in respect of international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet but not in respect of the day-to-day technical and operational matters that do not impact upon those issues,

Reaffirming that the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society related to Internet governance, namely, the process towards enhanced cooperation and the convening of the Internet Governance Forum, are to be pursued by the Secretary-General through two distinct processes, and recognizing that the two processes may be complementary,

Also reaffirming paragraphs 35 through 37 and 67 to 72 of the Tunis Agenda,

Welcoming the efforts undertaken by the host countries in organizing the meetings of the Internet Governance Forum, held in Athens in 2006, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2007, in Hyderabad, India, in 2008, in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in 2009, in Vilnius in 2010 and in Nairobi in 2011,

Recognizing the pivotal role of the United Nations system in promoting development, including with respect to enhancing access to information and communications technologies, inter alia, through partnerships with all relevant stakeholders,

Welcoming, in view of the existing gaps in information and communications technologies infrastructure, the Connect Africa summits held in Kigali in 2007 and in Cairo in 2008, the Connect the Commonwealth of Independent States summit held in Minsk in 2009, the meeting of Commonwealth countries held in Colombo in 2010, the First Digital Agenda Assembly of the European Union held in Brussels on 16 and 17 June 2011 and the annual European Dialogue on Internet Governance, which are regional initiatives aimed at mobilizing human, financial and technical resources to accelerate the implementation of the connectivity goals of the World Summit on the Information Society,

1. *Recognizes* that information and communications technologies have the potential to provide new solutions to development challenges, particularly in the context of globalization, and can foster sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth and sustainable development, competitiveness, access to information and knowledge, poverty eradication and social inclusion that will help to expedite the integration of all countries, especially developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, into the global economy;

2. *Expresses concern* regarding the digital divide in access to information and communications technologies and broadband connectivity between countries at different levels of development, which affects many economically and socially relevant applications in areas such as government, business, health and education, and further expresses concern with regard to the special challenges faced in the area of broadband connectivity by developing countries, including the least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries;

3. *Acknowledges* that a gender divide exists as part of the digital divide, and encourages all stakeholders to ensure the full participation of women in the information society and women's access to and use of information and communications technologies for their overall empowerment and benefit;

4. *Stresses* that, for the majority of the poor, the development promise of science and technology, including information and communications technologies, remains unfulfilled, and emphasizes the need to effectively harness technology, including information and communications technologies, to bridge the digital divide;

5. *Also stresses* the important role of Governments in the design of their national public policies and in the provision of public services responsive to national needs and priorities through, inter alia, the effective use of information and communications technologies, including on the basis of a multi-stakeholder approach, to support national development efforts;

6. *Recognizes* that, in addition to financing by the public sector, financing of information and communications technologies infrastructure by the private sector has come to play an important role in many countries and that domestic financing is being augmented by North-South flows and complemented by South-South cooperation, and also recognizes that South-South and triangular cooperation can be useful tools for promoting the development of information and communications technologies;

7. *Also recognizes* that information and communications technologies present new opportunities and challenges and that there is a pressing need to address the major impediments that developing countries face in accessing the new technologies, such as insufficient resources, infrastructure, education, capacity, investment and connectivity and issues related to technology ownership, standards and flows, and in this regard calls upon all stakeholders to provide adequate resources, enhanced capacity-building and technology transfer, on mutually agreed terms, to developing countries, particularly the least developed countries;

8. *Further recognizes* the immense potential that information and communications technologies have in promoting the transfer of technologies in a wide spectrum of socio-economic activity;

9. *Encourages* strengthened and continuing cooperation between and among stakeholders to ensure the effective implementation of the outcomes of the Geneva[1] and Tunis[2] phases of the World Summit on the Information Society through, inter alia, the promotion of national, regional and international multi-stakeholder partnerships, including public-private partnerships, and the promotion of national and regional multi-stakeholder thematic platforms in a joint effort and dialogue with developing countries, including the least developed countries, development partners and actors in the information and communications technologies sector;

10. *Reaffirms* the role of the General Assembly in the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held by the end of 2015, as recognized in paragraph 111 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, and further decides to consider the modalities for this review process during its sixty-seventh session;

11. *Welcomes* the efforts undertaken by Tunisia, host of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in collaboration with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the International Telecommunication Union and other relevant international and regional organizations, for organizing annually the ICT 4 All Forum and technological exhibition as a platform within the framework of the follow-up to the Summit to promote a dynamic business environment for the information and communications technologies sector worldwide;

12. *Notes* the progress that has been made by United Nations entities in cooperation with national Governments, regional commissions and other stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, in the implementation of the action lines contained in the outcome documents of the World Summit on the Information Society, and encourages the use of those action lines for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;

13. *Also notes* the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional level, facilitated by the regional commissions, as observed in the report of the Secretary-General on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit at the regional and international levels;[9]

14. *Encourages* the United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies, within their respective mandates and strategic plans, to contribute to the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, and emphasizes the need for resources in this regard;

15. *Recognizes* the urgent need to harness the potential of knowledge and technology, and in this regard encourages the United Nations development system to continue its effort to promote the use of information and communications technologies as a critical enabler of development and a catalyst for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

16. *Also recognizes* the role of the United Nations Group on the Information Society as an inter-agency mechanism of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination designed to coordinate United Nations implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society;

17. *Notes* the report of the Chair of the Working Group on Improvements to the Internet Governance Forum,[10] and takes note of the decision of the Economic and Social Council, in paragraphs 27 to 29 of its resolution 2011/16, to extend the mandate of the Working Group until the fifteenth session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in order for it to complete its task in accordance with its mandate, and urges the Working Group to submit its

[9] A/66/64-E/2011/77.

[10] A/66/67-E/2011/79.

recommendations to the Commission at its fifteenth session, which shall constitute an input from the Commission to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council;

18. *Stresses* the need for the enhanced participation of all developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, in all Internet Governance Forum meetings, and in this regard invites Member States, as well as other stakeholders, to support the participation of Governments and all other stakeholders from developing countries in the Forum itself, as well as in the preparatory meetings;

19. *Recalls* paragraph 22 of its resolution 65/141, takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on enhanced cooperation on public policy issues pertaining to the Internet,[11] and particularly of the consultations convened by the Secretary-General through the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, including the meeting held in New York on 14 December 2010, invites the Chair of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to convene, in conjunction with the fifteenth session of the Commission, a one-day open, inclusive and interactive meeting, involving all Member States and other stakeholders, particularly those from developing countries, including the private sector, civil society and international organizations, with a view to identifying a shared understanding about enhanced cooperation on public policy issues pertaining to the Internet, in accordance with paragraphs 34 and 35 of the Tunis Agenda, and requests the Secretary-General to include information on the outcome of the meeting when preparing his report on the status of the implementation of and follow-up to the present resolution;

20. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly for consideration at its sixty-seventh session, through the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Economic and Social Council, a report on the status of the implementation of and follow-up to the present resolution, as part of his annual reporting on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels;

21. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-seventh session the item entitled "Information and communications technologies for development".

[11] A/66/77-E/2011/103.